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R.S., Appellant)	
)	
and)	Docket No. 20-1232
)	Issued: April 28, 2021
)	
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, SOUTH SUBURBAN)	
PROCESSING & DISTRIBUTION CENTER,)	
Bedford Park, IL, Employer)	
)	

Case Submitted on the Record

Before:
ALEC J. KOROMILAS, Chief Judge
JANICE B. ASKIN, Judge
PATRICIA H. FITZGERALD, Alternate Judge

On July 31, 2014 appellant, then a 49-year-old distribution operations supervisor, filed an occupational disease claim (Form CA-2) alleging that, since her prior April 2, 2014 work-related back injury,² she experienced lumbar radiculopathy and severe pain and cramping in her right foot. She stopped work on April 2, 2014. OWCP accepted appellant's claim for tenosynovitis of the

² Appellant had a prior claim for an April 2, 2014 traumatic injury which OWCP accepted for lumbosacral spondylolisthesis, lumbar spinal stenosis, lumbar spine sprain, and left hip enthesopathy, under OWCP File No. xxxxxx798.

right foot and ankle and right idiopathic peripheral neuropathy, and assigned the claim OWCP File No. xxxxxx755.

On June 24, 2016 appellant filed a claim for a schedule award (Form CA-7).

By decision dated March 8, 2017, OWCP granted appellant a schedule award for four percent permanent impairment of the right lower extremity due to her accepted right foot and ankle injuries. The period of the award ran for 11.52 weeks from June 2 to August 21, 2016. On March 17, 2017 appellant, through counsel, requested a telephonic hearing before a representative of OWCP's Branch of Hearings and Review, which was held on August 30, 2017.

By decision dated October 19, 2017, OWCP's hearing representative affirmed the March 8, 2017 decision. Because of cross-referencing between the files, she directed OWCP to administratively combine appellant's prior claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx798 with the present claim, OWCP File No. xxxxxx755, to provide a complete and accurate factual and medical history.

OWCP, by decision dated November 25, 2019, denied appellant's claim for an increased schedule award. On December 2, 2019 appellant, through counsel, again requested a telephonic hearing before a representative of OWCP's Branch of Hearings and Review, which was held on March 10, 2020.

By decision dated April 23, 2020, the hearing representative affirmed the November 25, 2019 decision.

The Board has duly considered the matter and finds that this case is not in posture for decision. OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined where correct adjudication depends on cross-referencing between files and where two or more injuries occur to the same part of the body.³ The medical evidence of record indicates that appellant's alleged left foot conditions in the present claim may be causally related to her accepted back conditions in OWCP File No. xxxxxx798. Although directed by the hearings representative to combine the files, the electronic case record as transmitted to the Board, however, indicates that they had not been combined. Due to frequent cross-referencing of the claims, for a full and fair adjudication, the case must be returned to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record, OWCP File No. xxxxxx755, with OWCP File No. xxxxxx798. This will allow OWCP to consider all relevant claim files in developing appellant's schedule award claim.⁴

Accordingly, the Board will remand the case to OWCP to administratively combine OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx755 and xxxxxx798. Following this and other such development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* decision on appellant's increased schedule award claim.

³ Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000).

⁴ *Id.*

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the April 23, 2020 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and the case is remanded to OWCP for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: April 28, 2021
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Alternate Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board